

**SUMMARY OF THE
FOURTH INTERIM MEETING OF THE
NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL LABORATORY ACCREDITATION CONFERENCE
JANUARY 11-14, 1999**

INTRODUCTION

The National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Conference (NELAC) held its Fourth Interim Meeting, NELAC IVi, January 11-14, 1999, at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Bethesda, MD. The meeting was sponsored by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Approximately 314 individuals participated.

OPENING PLENARY SESSION

Ms. Jeanne Mourrain, NELAC Director, welcomed participants in the opening plenary session and announced that the implementation phase of the National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Program (NELAP) is moving forward. She introduced members of the NELAC Board and the committee chairs. For those interested in NELAC committee membership, Ms. Mourrain said that a short form was available at the conference registration desk. She then reminded participants that there would be a reception from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m. so that they may have an opportunity to interact with Board members on a more personal basis.

Highlights for the interim meeting were given by Ms. Elizabeth Dutrow. Her remarks covered meeting arrangements, operation of the conference, as well as helpful hints for making the best use of the conference. She explained the role of Research Triangle Institute (RTI), which under contract to EPA, provides for the logistical details of operating the meeting. This includes management of the registration desk, facilitating meetings, and committing to a final summary of discussions in each committee. Ms. Dutrow reviewed the contents of the registration packets and the schedule for the conference. She pointed out that in addition to the conference evaluation form, included in the registration packet, session evaluation forms will be distributed at each committee session this year. Ms. Dutrow invited participants to attend an Environmental Laboratory Advisory Board (ELAB) open forum on Wednesday, following the closing plenary. The open forum provides an opportunity for participants to air issues that they want ELAB to consider. The agenda for the ELAB meeting on Thursday morning includes issues identified at the open forum, as well as a new report prepared by the ELAB Performance-Based Measurement Systems (PBMS) workgroup on the implementation of PBMS, a workgroup report on small laboratory issues and NELAC, and a report from ELAB's third party assessor's workgroup.

In closing, Ms. Dutrow announced that Saratoga Springs, NY will be the location for NELAC V. Conference arrangements are being handled by the State of New York. The registration packet contains details of the meeting. Ms. Dutrow pointed out that the information sheet also states that the Accrediting Authority Assessor training will be offered over the weekend prior to NELAC V. She asked that Federal or State employees who are considering service on a NELAP assessment team, but have not had this training, please see her during the conference meeting to register. Participant interest will be used to determine whether this course will be offered June 26-27, 1999.

REMARKS FROM THE CHAIR

Dr. Ken Jackson began by noting that the Interim Meeting is often referred to as a ~~A~~working meeting. What this means is that we do not vote at the Interim Meeting; we discuss changes to the standards. Dr. Jackson discussed four of the big issues NELAC is facing right now. The first is Performance-Based Measurement Systems (PBMS). EPA has announced a general move toward adoption of PBMS. NELAC will adhere to the commitment made to work with EPA, and at the same time, allow for nationwide accreditation of laboratories. There has been considerable progress within NELAC over the last year towards making the standards compatible with PBMS. To meet the goal of having only one set of standards, there will have to be a compromise. The second issue is the assessor training program. The On-site Assessment Committee is seeking input on what stakeholders want in an assessor training program. We must move forward quickly and find funding. The third issue is the proficiency testing program. The Proficiency Testing Committee has developed a comprehensive standard, but no PT program is in place yet. The PT program is essentially the externalization of EPA's Water Pollution (WP) and Water Supply (WS) program. There is an urgent need to extend list of analytes beyond the WS and WP analytes (e.g., solid waste). The fourth and final issue is the concern from small laboratories. There is concern that the NELAC standards have been developed for large commercial laboratories. ELAB has formed a workgroup on small laboratory issues. The Virginia NELAC Workgroup submitted a substantial list of concerns. These were distributed to the appropriate committees. Small lab issues are being addressed in an ongoing and serious fashion.

Dr. Jackson said that the process of developing and adopting standards is a rigorous process. In order to provide stability, the Board of Directors and committee chairs have adopted a new rule for the revision of standards. While it is still true that anybody can propose a change, in essence, the new policy states that standards can be revisited only when there is new information and/or substantive reasons. He said that there will be comments during the committee sessions, but because the committees have an agenda, the better way to provide comments is in writing. It is policy that any comments given in writing will be addressed. Dr. Jackson urged everyone to submit comments as soon as possible.

Dr. Jackson ended his remarks by saying that tremendous progress has been made by following three principles: work cooperatively, continue compromising, and ensure that the rigor and quality of existing programs is not reduced. He said that if we remember these principles, we will continue to make great progress.

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Dr. Jackson then introduced the keynote speaker, Ms. Ramona Trovato. Ms. Trovato has served with EPA since 1973 and currently serves as the Director of the Office of Children's Health Protection. Ms. Trovato has been very active in NELAC and currently serves as the Co-Chair of ELAB. Dr. Jackson lauded her contributions.

In her remarks, Ms. Trovato said that she believes trust, respect, honor, and a genuine desire to include everyone have made this voluntary program successful. Our shared belief that we are improving the existing system and doing the right thing makes it possible to move ahead. She

also attributed NELAC's success to the government and private sector working together. Promises and commitments have been honored.

Ms. Trovato said that all of this is possible only because there are so many people from many key groups involved. The States are primarily responsible for implementing this program and have been stalwart co-authors of the standards. The private sector's involvement in ELAB and all committees have ensured that the standards and process are practical, cost-effective, and address some outstanding issues like PBMS and externalizing PE samples. The other federal agencies are helping to ensure that this is a truly national program. EPA facilitates and organizes the conference and committees and provides programmatic insight.

Ms. Trovato said that this has been an amazing journey. Although much has been done (i.e., standards), there is more to do. We need to interest more states in adopting standards; assure that uniform training for state assessors is readily available, incorporate PBMS into all aspects of the NELAC standards, and begin to address the issue of field sampling. To ensure data quality in field sampling we need to have the right people involved. Ms. Trovato asked participants to think about this as we proceed. She asked them to be patient through the initial stages of implementation, to continue to work to improve the system, and to rely on the trust and respect we have developed since 1990 to allow us to move boldly forward.

STATUS OF ACCREDITING AUTHORITIES

Ms. Jeanne Mourrain provided an update on status of accrediting authorities and a summary of the Accrediting Authority Roundtable which met January 11, 1999. She said that to become a NELAP-recognized accrediting authority is challenging, but fulfilling. The original list of applicants contained 19 states: AR, CA, CO, DE, FL, ID, IL, KS, LA, MD, NH, NJ, NY, OR-Health, OR-Environ., PA, TX, UT, VA, and WV. MD, VA, and WV have withdrawn their application and DE's is still pending. So far, technical review has been done for 8 states. Onsite assessment has been conducted for 7 states. New York is the only state that has a letter of recommendation for NELAP recognition. No state, however, will be NELAP Recognized until the process has been completed for the first group, i.e. all state programs will be simultaneously recognized. (Note that all states in the first group will be included if all deadlines are met).

Ms. Mourrain stated that the current goal is to get all states on-board. We need to resolve problems resolved and correct deficiencies. She said that a successful program for accrediting authorities includes: assessors' knowledge, collaboration and cooperation, advance planning and communications to assure smooth operation, and training to provide uniformity and structure. One of the side benefits is that it provides a unique opportunity to participate in NELAC.

Future plans include refining the 25-page checklist and reports. This involves removing redundancies and assuring that all questions are objective and instructions are parallel. The accrediting authority assessor training is scheduled to take place on April 11-12, 1999 (QA Annual Meeting) and again in July, 1999 (NELAC Fifth Annual Meeting). Ms. Mourrain said the process is working well, but a little slower than anticipated due to the large number of applicants. The first group of accrediting authorities is expected to be recognized by April 1, 1999.

UPDATE ON ACCREDITATION OF PROVIDERS

Dr. Jackson introduced Mr. James L. Cigler from the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST). Mr. Cigler currently serves as chief of the National Voluntary Laboratory Accreditation Program (NVLAP) with responsibilities for the accreditation of both testing and calibration laboratories.

Mr. Cigler provided an update on the accreditation of providers of proficiency testing (PPT). Copies of the presentation were available at the meeting and Mr. Cigler said that a master copy would be given to Ms. Elizabeth Dutrow.

Regarding program authority, the proficiency testing oversight body (PTOB) has been an ongoing issue. Representatives from EPA met with NIST NVLAP and measurement divisions to ensure competence of privatized WS/WP proficiency test providers. This included representatives from the Office of Ground Water and Drinking Water (OGWDW), Office of Enforcement and Compliance (OECA), and the Office of Research and Development (ORD). The current status for program authority is that NVLAP will accredit providers and NIST will help with oversight activities. This was announced officially June 12, 1997 in the Federal Register (Vol. 62, No. 113).

Mr. Cigler listed the following applicable standards and guides:

- USEPA National Standards for Water Proficiency Testing Studies: Criteria Document, August 1998 (December 1998 version now available)
- NIST Technical Note 1297, 1994 ed., Guidelines for Evaluating and Expressing the Uncertainty of NIST Measurement Results
- Quantifying Uncertainty in Analytical Measurements, Eurachem, 1995
- ISO 9002 (ANSI/ASQC Q9002), Quality Systems-Model for Quality Assurance in Production, Installation, and Servicing, 1994
- ISO Guides 25, 30, 34, 35, 43, International Vocabulary of Metrology Terms (VIM), Guide to the Expression of Uncertainty in Measurement (GUM)

He said that the program is centered around ISO/IEC Guide 25, which provides general requirements for the competence of testing and calibration laboratories. ISO/IEC Guide 25 is published as part of NIST Handbook 150, which provides NVLAP procedures and general requirements. NIST Handbook 150-XX (October 1998 Draft) amplifies the general requirements.

Mr. Cigler said that proficiency testing is an integral part of NVLAP and presents a unique challenge. NIST is approaching proficiency testing from two directions: direct and indirect. In the direct approach, NIST sends samples to providers of proficiency testing (PPT) for analysis. This is the ~~traditional~~ NVLAP approach. In the indirect approach, the PPT sends samples of production to NIST for analysis. This is more of a quality assurance approach. Limits and failure policy are the same in each approach. The critical limits are established by USEPA. Failure policy is established in NIST Handbook 150-XX.

The PPT must monitor study data sets for anomalous patterns and report significant deviations to NIST. NIST Analytical Chemistry Division (ACD) will review study data and report results to NVLAP.

Program commencement is based on 48 analyte categories, which are described in Appendix E of NIST Handbook 150-XX. These analyte categories are the result of the water standards program. However, the program will be expanded to include radiochemistry proficiency testing. Air proficiency testing has not yet been included, but may at a later time. Mr. Cigler noted that while not all PPTs have applied for accreditation in analysis of all 48 analytes, some of the PPTs applying will be covering all 48 categories.

Mr. Cigler provided a brief summary of program status. He said that the program has gone a little slower than anticipated. The original goal to have the program operational was June, 1998. The program commenced in November, 1998. Applications to become accredited providers were received from 11 PPTs. Microbiology will be included in the first round of accredited providers. In addition, one applicant has indicated that they will provide radiochemistry samples. Applications were received from 12 potential assessors, mostly from NIST ACD. Evaluation of applicant laboratories=quality manuals is in progress, on-site assessments and proficiency testing will follow. Most of the assessors will be from NIST ACD.

PPTs will be accredited as a class. The first class of accredited PPTs will include any PPT that has applied by January 4, 1999, and meets all the requirements for a PPT. Announcements for accredited providers will be on the NIST website. Because not all applications will be successful, a list of PPTs in the application process will be held in confidence. NIST is working on language to allow the release of information to EPA.

The following contact information was provided:

Phone: (301) 975-4016
Fax: (301) 926-2884
email: nvlap@nist.gov
website: <http://ts.nist.gov/nvlap>

NVLAP Calibration Program
Mr. C. Douglas Faison
Phone: (301) 975-5304

NIST Analytical Chemistry Division
Ms. Reenie Parris
Phone: (301) 975-3103

CLOSING COMMENTS

Ms. Jeanne Mourrain noted that the Interim Meeting has a relatively formal format. She encouraged participants to provide written comments. Then she introduced Ms. Nancy Wentworth, who is director of EPA Quality Assurance Division.

Ms. Wentworth recognized Dr. Charles Hartwig, who was retiring from the State of Florida, for his contributions to NELAC. She said that he has been involved with NELAC from the beginning, and jokingly asserted that retirement is not an excuse to be uninvolved. Dr. Hartwig was presented with a set of bookends made from the NELAC standards. Ms. Wentworth invited participants to stop by the registration desk and sign the bookends for Dr. Hartwig. In his acceptance of the bookends, Dr. Hartwig said that he has done a lot of things and seen a lot of things, but nothing has been as rewarding as the development of NELAC.

COMMITTEE WORKING SESSIONS

For two days following the opening plenary session, concurrent working sessions were held for all 13 standing, administrative, and *ad hoc* committees. Progress made by each committee, as well as principal unresolved issues (and expected time frames for addressing them) were presented in the closing plenary session. In keeping with the goals established for the national NELAC meetings, all working sessions were of an open-forum format in which attendees were encouraged to participate.

Program Policy and Structure C Acting Chair: Ms. Marcia Davies

The Program Policy and Structure Committee is dealing with four principal issues at this time. The committee hopes to take action on each of these issues by April 1, 1999. First, it has been proposed that NELAC should require a minimum list for analytes to be accredited for each regulatory program. This list would include those analytes regulated on a national level. The appropriate location for these lists may be in Chapter 1. The issue will be jointly addressed by Program Policy and Structure Committee, Regulatory Coordination Committee, and Proficiency Testing Committee. Second, a recommendation was made that primary accrediting authorities defer to secondary authorities if they offer a scope of accreditation which is more consistent with a laboratory's application. This would be if the primary offers a scope which is more limited than the application. It was noted that if accrediting authorities agree to a minimum list of analytes, then this will not be an issue. Third, the committee is considering the inclusion or exclusion of the agricultural labs when they are performing non-GLP FIFRA analytical services for both enforcement and monitoring. Language will be considered for inclusion in Chapter 1. Fourth, the committee is recommending that the Transition Committee oversee the development of a standardized laboratory application form. Ms. Davies said that they are considering this recommendation.

Highlights for the committee include a proposal to change the status of the Field Measurements Ad Hoc Committee to become a standing committee called the Field Activities Committee. The needed changes to the By-Laws and Chapter 1 will be proposed for a vote at NELAC V. Also,

considerable comments were received on a combined glossary. The committee intends to propose, at NELAC V, the addition of a glossary as an appendix to Chapter 1, as well as its contents.

Future plans include working with the Regulatory Committee on the inclusion of the Tribal Nations into NELAC as voting members. The Program Policy and Structure Committee will continue to review comments and consider them in developing the glossary and other changes to Chapter 1.

Proficiency TestingCChair: Ms. Anne Rhyne

The primary issue for the Proficiency Testing Committee is whether or not a state shall accept data from any NELAP-approved provider. Alternately, the issue is whether a state can limit the number of PT providers that their labs use. The current NELAC standards require that states accept PT data from any provider. This topic was discussed at length during the PT committee sessions. The committee will continue discussions, and hope to have this issue settled by NELAC V. Other issues which the committee intends to resolve before NELAC V are: clarify Section 2.1 to include reference to all new appendices; include in the microbiology appendix, references to verification of micro strains; discuss analyzing non-detect PT samples; and coordinate with the On-Site Assessment Committee to remove references to on-site assessments within Chapter 2. An ongoing goal is to expand PT provider accreditation and PT standards to include solid waste and air programs.

Highlights include the addition of Section 2.7.7, which allows laboratories to withdraw from PT studies, after notifying both the PT provider and the primary accrediting authority before the close of the study date. Section 2.6 was revised to state that the provider shall report to the state the method used for each analyte reported by the lab. Section E.1.1 was revised to clarify whether the sample is reconstituted.

On-Site AssessmentCChair: Mr. Steven Baker

On-site assessment checklists will be available by March 1, 1999. These will be method-specific to start. It has yet not been determined where the checklists will reside. Another issue is whether there should be an audit review of every SOP, method, etc. used by a laboratory, or if a representative review based on a laboratory's structure is sufficient. Training issues include: cost, time, location, and personnel. Cost is the major issue. Mr. Baker noted that the Registrar Accreditation Board (RAB) is one of the only organizations that certifies training of this manner. The time line for training will begin as soon as the first accrediting authority is certified (possibly in April, 1999). The grandfather clause is that all states have two years to acquire the basic training and four years to acquire the technical training. If the states miss this opportunity, they are expected to have the training complete when they apply for accreditation.

The committee plans to post all checklists in draft form on the NELAC web site. The committee hopes to receive comment which will help them to develop amended checklists to propose at NELAC V. They also plan to post additional technical training course outlines on the web site.

Accreditation Process Chair: Ms. Marge Provost

The primary issue faced by the committee deals with the accreditation requirements of mobile, auxiliary, and satellite laboratory facilities, specifically, whether these types of labs can be accredited under the auspices of their parent labs. The current NELAC standards allow this for some, but the distinctions are very blurred. Second, a related question is whether the work done by these types of labs would be categorized as field measurements. The Accreditation Process Committee plans to coordinate with the Field Measurements Committee to discuss the distinction between laboratory measurements and field measurements. The third issue is the clarification of the grandfather clause regarding technical directors of accredited laboratories. Because a loophole was noticed, it was proposed that technical directors be grandfathered-in only for similar types of facilities. A fourth issue is the retention of data after the transfer of laboratory ownership. Current standard states that the retention of data is the responsibility of the seller. This is unrealistic because if the seller disappears, then so does all the data. One option discussed is to transfer the role of record custodian to the new owner. The committee will continue discussions on this topic. The fifth substantive issue is the use of NELAP accreditation status, including the logo, by laboratories. The committee will research more information about copyright for the NELAP logo. Lastly, it was clarified that a laboratory can apply for accreditation with another state if its own state is non-NELAC. The committee intends to further discuss interim accreditation.

Quality Systems Chair: Mr. Joe Slayton

One highlight for the Quality Systems Committee is the development of ground rules for their own meetings. They have formalized their guiding principles and encourage other committees to do the same. The committee developed criteria (flexible, auditable, practical/essential, and widely applicable) for reviewing standards and addressing comments. Other highlights include major rewrites to Section 5.9.4 (calibration) and D.1.4 (detection limits), as well as a new Appendix D.5 (air testing).

Unresolved issues include: continued instrument calibration verification in Section 5.9.4.2.2, addition of a SOP for quantitation limit approach in D.1.4 (detection limits), inclusion of field related quality control in D.5 (air testing), consideration of matrix spike and matrix spike duplicate in D.1.1.b.2 and D.1.2 (practical and essential?).

The committee is considering the addition of another guiding principle, which is to strengthen the tie between data quality and the use of data. They will also update, per comments, Sections 5.9.4, D.1.4, D.5, and D.3. Appendix C and Section 5.10.2.1 (IDOC) will also be updated per comments received about non-spiking methods and to separate the responsibility of lab, analyst, and work cell. Other future plans include tabulations of records and procedures that are required/specified (e.g., internal audits) and an update of definitions for Appendix B. Action for these items is expected by April 1, 1999.

Accrediting Authority Chair: Mr. John Anderson

The committee reported that only minor revisions were necessary to Chapter 6. These revisions will allow the accreditation process to flow more smoothly. The committee had prepared a

conflict-of-interest statement in response to ELAB concerns, however, the proposal was declared unworkable and unnecessary. No related changes were made to the standards, and committee discussions on the topic will continue.

One issue raised is about consistency between programs. There was concern that laboratories be accredited by the same standards from one state to the next. The committee plans to offer suggestions to USEPA by June 1, 1999, regarding development of internal quality systems. The committee is seeking input regarding consistency of the application process of accrediting authorities. They also seek input regarding application of ISO 9100 guidance.

Regulatory Coordination Chair: Dr. Carl Kircher

The committee discussed draft standard ISO Guide 17025, which replaces ISO Guide 25, and assessed its impacts to accreditation. This will have a significant impact on Chapter 5 because the chapter is based on ISO Guide 25. The committee plans to submit a report on these impacts to the Quality Systems Committee and to NELAC committee chairs. The committee also discussed USEPA's October, 1998, regulatory agenda and noted changes in the timetable. They intend to have the agenda reviewed by April, 1999. The committee gave a formal endorsement on NELAC Figure 1-3 to the Policy and Structure Committee. Lastly, the committee gave a formal proposal on Indian Tribal Nations (that existing language in the Constitution and Bylaws does allow tribal nations to participate at NELAC V) to the Policy and Structure Committee and the Membership and Outreach Committee.

Conference Management Chair: Ms. Marion Thompson

The primary highlight for the committee was discussion of whether or not the Conference Management Committee should be dissolved. The NELAC Executive Secretary is now doing much of the functions of the committee, however the committee wants to complete outstanding obligations. One of these is funding and sponsorship of the national meetings. There needs to be a mechanism for membership to make recommendations to the Board. The committee would like suggestions for future conferences. Ms. Thompson said that the duties of conference logistics will be continued by the NELAC Executive Secretary, along with ad hoc assistance from the outgoing Conference Management Committee Chair.

Membership and Outreach Chair: Dr. Irene Ronning

Dr. Ronning emphasized that the Web is an important tool, especially with a limited budget for public relations. The committee plans to post Frequently Asked Questions on the Web site by the next annual meeting. Also, to assist people in disseminating information about NELAC, the committee will be posting presentation materials on the NELAC Web site. The committee is currently in the process of putting together a package of presentation materials for the NELAC Director to approve. The backlog of posting of minutes and announcements has been the concern of many participants. She reminded participants that NELAC's Web pages are a part of USEPA's Web site. The committee makes recommendations of what to post, but control lies with EPA. Future goals of the committee include developing pre-approved press releases for journals and associations.

NELAC now has an official historian, Mr. Don Zahniser. He will be recording where NELAC is now and how the past has set the stage. Mr. Zahniser will also assist with archival aspects by documenting the intent of changes within the NELAC standards.

Nominating Committee Chair: Ms. Carol Batterton

The committee discussed vacancies on the Board of Directors and the Chair-Elect position. Terms on the board are ending for Dr. Charles Brokopp and Dr. Gary King. The committee has received suggestions from committee members and from others. They plan to finalize nominations for the Chair-Elect and two Board positions by April 1, 1999.

Field Measurements Chair: Dr. Bart Simmons (Ms. Marlene Moore standing in)

The Field Measurements Committee hopes to be voted into a standing committee in July, 1999. The committee is currently trying to address problems associated with sampling and identify the elements for a general sampling standard. They have discussed the history of field activities issues, and at ELAB's request, have prepared a sampling issue paper. The committee will continue to document problems associated with sampling and develop a list of these.

Other activities of the Field Measurements Committee include the development of a list of field activities references. They intend to continue to build and expand this list of living documents. They have also suggested changes to Chapters 3 and 5 to incorporate field measurements. Unresolved issues include the structure of fields of testing with sampling and field measurements, suggestions for the glossary, and documenting problems associated with sampling. Future plans include proposing language for PBMS field activities.

National Database Chair: Mr. Matt Caruso

The committee has reviewed and approved the revised Requirements document provided by the EPA software contractor. Mr. Caruso noted that the contractor was able to meet all of the needs in the database. A list of approved methods to be used in National Database has not been resolved; the committee will put this request to the Program Policy and Structure Committee and/or the NELAC Board of Directors by March 15, 1999. They are awaiting issuance of a delivery order from EPA to the software contractor for further database development.

Transition Co-chair: Dr. Charles Brokopp

Future plans for the committee include completion of accrediting authority approvals. Out of 20 applicants, 3 withdrew, 14 have finished the completeness review, 7 have had onsite assessments, and one is complete. They expect around 13 organizations to be accredited somewhere in the near future. The committee has recently completed an interest survey and expect about five more organizations to submit completed applications to become accrediting authorities. The committee also plans to resolve transition issues and respond to frequently asked questions (FAQs).

Anticipated time lines for the accrediting authorities and laboratories are as follows. By the end of March, 1999, the first round of accrediting authorities should be approved. From March to June, 1999, laboratories will be able to submit applications. From June, 1999, to March, 2000, laboratories will be reviewed. And by April, 2000, they hope to accredit the first laboratory by the NELAC standards. Regarding the capacity of accrediting authorities, only 10 have the capacity to accredit laboratories outside their own state. The committee will continue to work on

the issue of capacity of accrediting authorities, as well as resolve issues such as the phase-in of NELAC, policy, and cross-over issues (e.g., accrediting authorities).

CLOSING PLENARY SESSION

In her closing remarks, Ms. Jeanne Mourrain said that there were over 300 participants at this Interim Meeting. She asked for suggestions on how to communicate with first time participants better. She also asked participants to please consider joining committees. Ms. Mourrain said that during the course of the meeting, only one state person indicated interest in taking the training session in Saratoga Springs. If there are not enough participants, that training session may have to be canceled. She asked participants to please contact Elizabeth Dutrow as soon as possible if interested in attending. She also pointed out that March 28 is the deadline for the comments on standards.

In response to concern voiced about delay of postings on the NELAC Web site, Ms. Mourrain explained the review process that occurs between committee meetings and posting on the Web site. USEPA is looking into getting more support so that postings can happen more quickly. She affirmed that the minutes for this meeting will be posted on Web within 30 days. Ms. Mourrain also noted that they have received several suggestions for the Web site and these are being considered too.

Dr. Ken Jackson then spoke about the NELAC V annual meeting in Saratoga Springs, NY. He pointed out that there is a flyer in participants=registration packets. Dr. Jackson urged those interested in attending to make reservations as soon as possible. The entire hotel has been reserved for the meeting, and there will be overflow hotels as well. When calling the hotel, participants must tell them that it is for NELAC (otherwise they will tell you the hotel is booked full). The nearest airport is in Albany, NY. He spoke of the possibility of arranging specialty transportation. A notice containing this sort of information will go out in the spring. Dr. Jackson said that Saratoga Springs is a delightful place to visit. Social events are being planned, such as a mixer, a banquet at the Gideon Putnam Hotel, and some entertainment. Dr. Jackson thanked everyone for coming and reminded them of the ELAB open forum to follow.